



GATCOMB'S MUSICAL GAZETTE

DEVOTED TO THE INTERESTS OF MUSIC AND MUSICIANS.

VOL. VI. No. 3.

NOVEMBER, 1892.

Single Copy 10 Cents.
One Dollar a Year.

MY BONNY BLUE EYE'D BESS. (Descriptive.)

WORDS AND MUSIC BY GEORGE H. COES.

Blow on! gentle gales, and swell the sails
And speed my Bark o'er the ocean blue,
For my blue eye'd Bess whom I long to caress
Is lonely awaiting her lover so true.

Ah, well I remember the last time we met,
The words that she spake, I ne'er can forget,
Farewell! take my heart, may good angels guide
Thee safe, and return to your fond loving bride.
The stars shone bright, when we parted that night,
Her face calm and pale, as we stood on the shore,
The tears on her cheek, her voice soft and meek,
Whispered gentle, "I'll watch for your coming
once more."

Fair and strong blow the gales, and the wide spreading
sails,
Drive my Bark through the waves, as they've oft
done before.

The man at the wheel, with arms, strong as steel
Smile's a grim smile, as the winds loudly roar.
But Hark! a crash! the mainsail has gone!

And still my proud Bark sails heedlessly on.
Bend another! my lads, work sharp my brave crew
And I'll double your ration of Grog if ye do!

Soon a new sail was bent, and on my Bark went,
And with fair gentle gales we soon sighted the
land.

Then up went a cheer as the coast we drew near,
For there Bonny Bess stood alone on the sand.
Well done gallant Bark, well done gallant crew,
Bess saluted each one, as they leaped on the shore,
Then waving her veil, she blessed the fair gale,
That wafted safe back her true lover once more.

Blow on &c.

GEORGE H. COES.

Many of the younger readers of the GAZETTE who have been interested in the experiences of the "Bacchus Minstrels in China," and who are favored almost every month with an article from the same pen, have been desirous of a more intimate introduction to their author, and now that a movement has been made, in which we heartily co-operate, to tend Mr. Coes a benefit at which it is hoped that as many

as possible of his old friends will appear, we feel that an outline of his wonderful career on the minstrel stage will be of general interest, and that it may reawaken memories which have been suffered to sleep during the two years which have passed since Mr. Coes was obliged by a serious illness to withdraw from his prominent position before the public. He is one of the few who now remain to tell us what minstrelsy used to be in the '50's and '60's, when it was legitimate as now, alas! it is not.

George H. Coes was born December 6, 1828, in Providence, R. I. When he was twelve years old he began to study the violin and three years later he formed a vocal minstrel company, composed of nine youthful members rejoicing in the title of "The Ethiopian Serenaders." One of them owned an instrument which resembled a banjo of to day, but which (according to Mr. Coes best recollection) was never produced in public. There were, however, a variety of other instruments great and small, of which Mr. Coes with his violin was the leader, and which were practised assiduously in the loft of a stable. During the year the "Ethiopian Serenaders" announced their first public entertainment, and chose the little town of Danielsonville, Ct., as a fitting place for modest debutants. Failing to obtain a license to give an entertainment in the hall, they decided to use the dining room of the "hotel," situated on a hill a short distance from the village, and advertised the price of admission at ninepence ($12\frac{1}{2}$ cents.) Aspiring serenaders in America have always met with little encouragement, and the young "Ethiopians" of 1843 had need of extraordinary strength of purpose, for when the eventful evening arrived they found themselves before an "audience of one." It was a sympathetic audience however, and the pro-

gram was rendered as a "dress rehearsal," notice being given that the concert was postponed until the following night. The "audience" thereupon wended its way to the village and must certainly have fulfilled the mission of an angel in disguise for the next evening they played to a \$3.75 house, thus mending their falling fortunes to some extent. But it did not suffice; the "Ethiopian Serenaders" left their instruments in Danielsonville and walked twenty five miles to their homes. The managers grew tired of their arduous duties, and Mr. Coes can claim the honor of having taken an active part in the first and only public appearance of this famous band. Probably its history would have been less brief had its members realized how much talent they commanded, or had they even dreamed that their name and fame would not be forgotten after fifty years!

For four years after his first taste of public life, Mr. Coes worked at the jeweler's trade, practising meanwhile on the banjo and playing occasionally for different organizations as they visited Providence, thus unconsciously fitting himself for the position which was opened for him in 1847 to join W. W. Newcomb's Vaudeville Co., of which Juba, the famous jig-dancer was then a member. Mr. Coes played both banjo and violin for this company during an eleven weeks' tour through the Eastern states. In 1851 Mr. Coes made his first appearance in a professional minstrel entertainment, with Messrs. Wells and Birch, of Cincinnati. He was engaged to play a banjo solo as also the violin for the jig dancing which, in those days, was a leading attraction. This event determined Mr. Coes' career, and in the following year he went to California, where he became one of the founders of the famous Bacchus Minstrels of San Francisco. So great was their success that Thomas Maguire of the

Maguire Opera House bought the company and established the "San Francisco Minstrels," with whom Mr. Coes continued to play until 1858 when he left California with Geo. Christy in R. M. Hooley's Company. They played six weeks in New Orleans and afterwards in Natchez, Memphis, Chicago, St. Louis, Indianapolis, Madison, Louisville, Cincinnati, Pittsburgh, and opened in New York, May 7th, 1859. They were obliged, however, to go on the road again as Mr. Christy was under an agreement with Henry Wood not to appear in New York for a certain length of time. Mr. Coes played with Bryant's Minstrels until the following July, and then returned to California to rejoin the San Francisco Company, with whom he remained until 1862, when he reorganized the Bacchus Minstrels and went with them to China. They played in Shanghai, Hong Kong, Macao, Canton and smaller cities, and at the end of eight months returned to San Francisco and to its famous minstrels. It seemed for a time that Mr. Coes would not again leave California, which was then and still remains, to him, the "fairest land of earth," but the company with whom he had been so long associated came to New York in May, 1865, and Mr. Coes soon afterward followed them to the East and joined the "Morris Brothers, Pell and Trowbridge Minstrels," with whom he played through two seasons of four months each, acting as stage manager, interlocutor, and banjo soloist.

Mr. Coes was at this time counted the champion banjo player of the United States, and his fame as a minstrel extended from the eastern to the western coast. In 1867 he organized a company which ran an entire season at Seaver's Opera House, in New York, after which he joined R. W. Butler of the American Theatre in that city, with whom he remained until 1869 when the theatre was burnt. Again Mr. Coes went to California, and this time he joined W. H. Smith at the famous "Alhambra," where he remained until December, 1870, when he was recalled to the East by Butler, who had opened the "Theatre Comique," at 514 Broadway. The famous banjoist during this engagement introduced the Scotch and Irish airs for banjo and orchestra and won such laurels as are still fresh in the memories of all lovers of minstrelsy. Afterward when Butler became proprietor of the Union Square Theatre, Mr. Coes acted as his stage manager, and it was during this engagement that the celebrated Vokes family appeared there.

In the summer of 1872, Mr. Coes came to Boston with a very large variety company and played a four weeks' engagement at the Boston Theatre. While there Schoolcraft and Coes formed the first link in the chain of events which has since associated them so closely together in the mind of the public. They made an arrangement with John Stetsou to remain in this city a year, at the end of which time the agreement was renewed. When the

second year had elapsed, "Schoolcraft and Coes," made a tour through the United States, playing at different variety halls "which," as Mr. Coes recently remarked, "we had no further trouble in hiring." Their successful career with the "Barlow, Wilson, Primrose and West Minstrels," with Haverley's, with Barlow and Wilson and with Wilson and Rankin, is of too recent date to need more than passing mention here.

In striking contrast with his success in the line of work to which he has devoted his life, is the sadness which for thirty-five years has overshadowed Mr. Coes' home owing to the lingering illness of his wife. For ten years Mrs. Coes has not been a moment without pain, and for the past two years Mr. Coes himself has been incapacitated having become partially paralyzed. A very old and feeble mother is another member of the household. Should the *Gazette* come under the notice of any of the thousands who have known Mr. Coes in his public career, we trust that this sketch of his life may serve to awaken an active interest in the benefit which his private and professional friends in this city are anxious to tender him. We can but feel that their enthusiasm should find an echo in the West, where Mr. Coes was so long one of the Public's favorites.

Mr. Coes was also associated with the two most gigantic minstrel enterprises of the last decade, being one of R. M. Hooley's "Megetherean Minstrels" who numbered fifty strong under the management of Mr. Luke Schoolcraft in 1882, and in 1886 an honored member of Wm. Foote's company, the largest ever formed, and composed of sixty men and forty women who played at McVicker's Theatre in Chicago.

THE LATEST MUSICAL NOVELTY.

A lady living in the region of Capitol Hill, Washington, whose name is withheld that she may not be annoyed by the wide-awake managers of dime museums and "freak" exhibitions,—is the owner of a beautiful cat, destined to be the most renowned of the feline race. Pussy and her mistress are unusually fond of music, the former especially having devoted her best attention for the past year to the cultivation of her voice. The result is that when her mistress says "Pussy come and sing Home Sweet Home with me" Pussy,—who never refuses the invitation,—immediately opens her mouth (after the most approved method) and, in high falsetto but with due regard for the melody, sings the well-known song from beginning to end. If she receives an *encore*, (as she usually does) she sings "Auld Lang Syne" with equally good results

Sometimes in the backyard concerts on moonlight nights, Pussy's voice may be heard above the others singing her favorite songs, and at such times the wrath of the neighbors at the musical chorus is allayed by the wonder and admiration which Puss's solos call forth.

CONCERTS.

The Boston Ideal Club will be assisted by "Merry" Marshall P. Wilder, at their annual concert in Tremont Temple, Nov. 23rd, thus adding another great attraction to their programme. Senor Luis T. Romero, the renowned guitarist is also to favor the audience, and will play several guitar duetts with Miss Beatrice Priest. The Club will be further assisted by Miss Louise Horner, the youngest lady banjoist before the public and by Mr. J. Frank Donahoe, who will render the "Darkies' Patrol" on the large organ. We have already had occasion to note the fine work which is being done by Geo. L. Lansing's Banjo Orchestra, and need only say that the enthusiasm evinced by each of the fifty chosen performers at the first rehearsal has in no wise abated under Mr. Lansing's judicious but vigorous training.

The Los Angeles (Cal.) Guitar and Banjo Club recently gave a concert in the Grand Opera House of that city. The following copy of the account of the brilliant occasion in the Los Angeles "Times" will prove the excellence of the work accomplished under Mr. C. S. DeLano's leadership. "The Guitar and Banjo Club's concert at the Grand Opera House last evening was the event of the season, so far, in amateur musical circles. The auditorium was packed, and with the élite of the city, who came in great numbers to see and hear their friends of the club in this their first concert of the season.

The club as a club played a number of selections, receiving several encores, and Prof. C. S. DeLano rendered "The Herdsman's Galop," a guitar solo of his own composition, which evoked the heartiest applause. Being forced to appear again, he played "The Last Rose of Summer" with such expression as only a guitar in experienced hands can produce. After a banjoline duet by C. S. DeLano and R. W. Whomes, accompanied by two banjos and two guitars, the programme closed with the "Blushing Rose Galop" by the club."

On the evening of Oct. 19th, the Boston Ideals played at the Academy of Music, in Newburgh, N. Y., to a crowded house. The press notices the next day were full of enthusiasm for the "Club" as a whole, and for all its individual members in particular, but perhaps the best praise was received from the depth of appreciation shown in the following words quoted from the Evening Press. "There is something about the harmony of those quaint instruments peculiarly touching and suggestive, and as the last notes of the "Darkies' Jubilee" died away, you could easily in imagination see the cotton-laden vessel ploughing its way from the Levee out into the great Mississippi."